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HOW TO COOK

DRIED FRUITS

There are a number of points to be considered in cooking dried fruits. The variety of fruit makes a difference in the treatment. Home-dried fruits may take longer to restore to moistness and tenderness than some brands of commercially dried fruits, especially those treated by the latest methods. Some fruits so treated need no soaking before use. Even the season of the year makes a difference in the dryness of the fruit and consequently in the soaking time.

Some varieties and brands of prunes and apricots can be eaten just as they are purchased, and of course figs, raisins, and dates are eaten without stewing except when used in cooked desserts.

Putting dried fruit into hot water speeds up moisture absorption, and cooking in the soaking water saves all the valuable food materials. Any water or juice remaining after the fruit is cooked should be used with it. Home-dried and late-season fruits may require soaking overnight. For more tender fruits it is often necessary to soak only half an hour to an hour and then cook.

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Dried peaches are usually considered best when cooked. They may be soaked in water for half an hour and cooked 15 to 20 minutes. Apricots and apples may need no soaking. Figs started in cold water have been found to cook in 20 to 30 minutes. Raisins may be cooked in 10 minutes in boiling water. Some of the fruits are best when a little sugar is added. A pinch of salt helps to bring out the flavor of any of the dried fruits. Many people add a little lemon juice or a slice of lemon when cooking prunes. Spice may be added to suit different tastes. In dried-fruit pies, the juice is sometimes thickened with a little cornstarch.

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